

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Proposed National Thousands-Block)	Docket 99-200
Number Pooling Roll-out Schedule)	

COMMENTS OF VOICESTREAM WIRELESS CORPORATION

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Brian T. O'Connor
Vice President - Legislative and
Regulatory Affairs

Anna Miller
Director - Numbering Policy

401 9th Street, N.W., Suite 550
Washington, D.C. 20004
202-654-5900

Michele K. Thomas
Manager - Regulatory Numbering Policy

16 Wing Drive
Cedar Knolls, NJ 07927
973-290-2566

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I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

VoiceStream Wireless Corporation ("VoiceStream") hereby files comments with the Federal Communications Commission ("Commission") in response to the October 17, 2001 Public Notice issued in this proceeding. In that Notice, the Commission requested comments on the proposed national thousands-block number pooling rollout schedule; specifically, the structure of the rollout schedule, including the proposed dates for implementing thousands-block pooling for specific NPAs.

For the reasons discussed below, VoiceStream expresses concerns regarding the national rollout schedule -- noting that the NPA's included on the proposed roll-out schedule only encompass those states within the top 100 MSAs that have not yet received delegated authority to conduct pooling trials in a given NPA and/or new NPAs. VoiceStream finds that the omission of plans to address the pooling establishment process or "catch up" for carriers who become LNP-capable after the NPA's Pool Start Date to be of critical concern for VoiceStream and the wireless industry. Therefore, VoiceStream respectfully requests that consideration be given to procedures that accommodate pooling establishment "catch up" for members of the wireless industry operating in NPAs with Pool Start Dates before November 24, 2002. Specifically, the

Commission should direct the Local Number Portability Administration Working Group's Wireless Number Portability Subcommittee ("WNPSC") Pooling Task Force to address the pooling establishment catch up process and develop a recommendation to facilitate effective and efficient CMRS carrier participation in Thousand Block Pooling.

II. BACKGROUND

Per the Public Notice in this proceeding, the Commission has determined that starting in March 2002 number pools will be established in approximately 21 numbering plan areas (NPAs) each quarter, with an initial concentration on NPAs in the top 100 MSAs, and a special focus on jeopardy NPAs that are within the largest 100 MSAs.¹ The Commission previously determined that 21 NPAs was the *maximum* number of NPAs that should be converted each quarter in order to protect network.² In addition, the Commission also previously provided three categories for the initial rollout schedule, which included: (1) NPAs that were initially pooled or scheduled to be pooled pursuant to delegations of pooling authority to state commission; (2) jeopardy NPAs in the largest MSAs that have a life of one year or more, and (3) new NPAs.³ The national rollout schedule published for comment in this proceeding, remains consistent in part with the Commission's decision in the *First Report and Order*. However, the national rollout schedule excludes specific consideration of those NPAs that are currently or soon-to-be

¹ *Federal Communications Commission* Public Notice, released October 17, 2001 CC Docket 99-200.

² See *Number Resource Optimization*, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 15 FCC Rcd 7574, 7645-46 ¶ 159 (rel. Mar 31, 2000)(*First Report and Order*).

³ *Id.*

pooling prior to March 2002 pursuant to delegated authority, as well as the publication of certain details requested by the Commission related to those NPAs.⁴

On November 24, 2002, when CMRS carriers become pooling capable, those carriers will convert the 21 NPAs scheduled for pooling during the fourth quarter of 2002. VoiceStream currently estimates that an additional 157 NPAs will fall into the category omitted in this proposed schedule --- the initially pooled or scheduled to be pooled NPAs pursuant to delegated authority to state commissions. This could result in the requirement that many members of the wireless industry implement pooling in about 178 NPAs in the fourth quarter of 2002 – in the middle of the busy holiday sales season. This potential outcome is in direct contradiction with the Commission’s concerns regarding the *maximum* number of NPAs to be transitioned to ensure network reliability. Moreover, it is uncertain how CMRS carriers can comply with the Public Notice statement that “pooling trials that have commenced before March 2002 will be transitioned into the national pooling administration program prior to the national pooling rollout.”⁵

Prior to the publication of the rollout schedule, a CTIA Task Force conducted a sample study to determine the pooling establishment process and workload for the wireless industry. The Task Force estimated that CMRS carriers may need up to 19,200 thousand blocks to meet demand during the fourth quarter of 2002 holiday sales season (based upon 160 pooled NPAs). For the activation of these blocks, CMRS carriers would need to submit to the Pooling Administrator, 4,800 months-to-exhaust worksheets, 4,800 Part

⁴ *Id.* at ¶ 51 (“[P]ursuant to this task, the selected Pooling Administrator must, as an initial task upon its appointment, identify the largest 100 MSAs within each NPAC region, *note the pooling trials initiated pursuant to delegated authority from the Commission*, and identify the jeopardy NPAs, by NPAC region, which are scheduled to exhaust within one year (emphasis added).”)

1a submissions, 19,200 Part 1b submissions, and 19,200 Part 4 submissions. In response, the Pooling Administrator would need to provide to CMRS carriers, 4,800 Part 3 returns and 19,200 Part 1b submissions. To address these concerns, the WNPSC has established a Pooling Task Force to consider and develop a pooling establishment catch up recommendation for the wireless industry.

III. THE THOUSAND BLOCK POOLING NATIONAL ROLL OUT SCHEDULE SHOULD INTEGRATE A POOLING ESTABLISHMENT CATCH UP PROCESS FOR CMRS CARRIERS

A CMRS pooling establishment catch up schedule for those NPAs with Pool Start Dates prior to November 24, 2002 would improve upon the national rollout schedule. Its integration would allow CMRS carriers the opportunity to efficiently and effectively prepare for this and other mandates scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2002. VoiceStream believes that failure to address this issue in the instant proceeding would be a major oversight.

The WNPSC Pooling Task Force is addressing this very issue. The Pooling Task Force is actively discussing and considering a Native Block Pooling methodology for pooling establishment catch up that is commonly known as “paper pooling.” Paper pooling reflects the absence of the electronic NPAC communication functionality. This methodology permits a carrier to complete the requisite Thousand Block Pooling establishment information manually and submit this paperwork to the Pooling Administrator. The details of this methodology are still under investigation by the Pooling Task Force. Major considerations include evaluating of the carriers’ and Pooling

⁵ Federal Communication Commission Public Notice, released October 17, 2001, CC Docket 99-200.

Administrator's processing capability, establishing catch up prioritization criteria, and developing the associated catch up plan and schedule.

CMRS carriers have yet to be advised whether there are plans to employ the normal Pooling Administrator's initial pooling implementation meeting schedule, with the date specific intervals for data submissions and review of the general forecast data prior to the launch of CMRS pooling in a given NPA. The details related to how the Pooling Administrator will address and process the above referenced data for the entire wireless industry prior to November 24, 2002 remain unclear. In addition, due to the timing of this event during the wireless industry's busiest sales season, mitigation of errors between individual carriers and Pooling Administrator personnel will be of paramount importance to all carriers and their millions of customers.

VoiceStream believes that thoughtful consideration of a pooling establishment catch up process is critical as a basis for the CMRS industry's participation in pooling. Further, the absence of any additional information related to the procedures, plan and schedule for catch-up will only result in uncertainty and inefficiency for both the Pooling Administrator and CMRS carriers. Ultimately, customers will be adversely affected by the errors of a needlessly rushed deployment.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons described above, VoiceStream respectfully requests that the Commission direct the WNPSC Pooling Task Force to address the pooling establishment catch up process carefully and develop and facilitate effective and efficient plans for CMRS carrier participation in Thousand Block Pooling.

Respectfully submitted

VoiceStream Wireless Corporation

By: /s/ Brian O'Connor
Brian T. O'Connor, Vice President
Legislative and Regulatory Affairs

Anna Miller, Director
Numbering Policy

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Washington, D.C. 20004
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